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REMARKS

The Office Action dated December 4, 2006 has been carefully considered. Claim 1 was the sole claim pending. By this Amendment, claim 1 has been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and new claims 2-10 have been added. Applicant submits that the claims presented hereby are patentable over the applied prior art and are supported by the original specification. Attached hereto as Exhibit A is a copy of the claims with reference numerals showing non-limiting support for terms used in the new claims.

As seen in Figs. 1 and 2 of this application, masking member 1A fits into an open hole 22A that penetrates part 2a that will be subjected to surface treatment from which hole 22A should be protected.

Masking member 1A has, in addition to fitting part 11A, a collar 12 at one end and a flange 13A at the other end. As best seen in Fig. 2, each of collar 12A and flange 13A has a circumference greater than that of hole 22A, thereby protecting both sides of hole 22A from surface treatment that would be applied to part 2A.

Another, more complex embodiment illustrated in Figs. 4-7 has similar flanges 13B and a collar in the form of a body 11B to similarly protect a multiplicity of holes 22B that penetrate part 2B.

It is submitted that the sole independent claim 2 differs significantly from the prior art applied against claim 1. For example:

- Bauer U.S. Patent 5,753,042 illustrates a support that fits into a closed hole of a part to be painted, while claim 2 makes it clear that the masking member fits into an open hole that penetrates the part such that the collar is at first side of the penetrating hole and the flange is at a second side. Each of the collar and the

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flange of claim 2 has a circumference greater than that of the hole, to protect the hole from both sides;

- Duggan U.S. Patent 2,328,203 also proposes a mask that fits into a closed hole and thus does not protect a hole from both sides of the part, in contrast to the masking member of claim 2; and
- Takashina, et al. JP-A 05111670, Fig. 4, illustrates a padding formed of urethane rather than of the thermoplastic resin sheet or film recited in claim 2.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge the additional claims fees, as well as any additional fees that may be required, in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

In view of the remarks above, Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance and earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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